STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT (BUSI 390-901) SYLLABUS

SPRING 2021

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Class time:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:00-9:20 AM
Class location:	Fully remote, see Zoom link in Canvas
Office Hours:	Thursdays 7 to 8 pm or by appointment, via Zoom: https://jgsb.zoom.us/j/4738538437?pwd=NndlYzkrSE9sdU05MHlYMEdoejBIdz09; passcode: 928777

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to expose students to fundamental issues in business strategy and enable them to analyze business situations from the point of view of the practicing general manager. Managers are responsible for making strategic decisions that ensure the long-term success of the entire firm or a major division. Students will master analytical tools central to decisions of how the firm competes against rivals to gain a sustainable competitive advantage, and in which markets the firm competes (i.e., the scope of the business). Decisions about how to compete within chosen market segments reflect the firm's business-level strategy; decisions about the scope of business constitute the firm's corporate strategy. This course focuses on how a firm can develop and implement effective business-level and corporate-level strategies, as well as the challenges it may face in doing so. At the end of the course, students will gain an appreciation for the challenges inherent to strategy and how organizations execute strategic turn-arounds.

COURSE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The course is designed to help students:

- Apply theories, concepts, and models that managers can use to develop and implement successful business-level, corporate, and innovation strategies;
- Understand how to take a general management view of strategic issues, one that integrates different functional perspectives into a perspective on what is best for the organization as a whole;
- Apply concepts and techniques learned in this course in order to perform an in-depth analysis and evaluation of a strategic issue facing a company; and,
- Improve leadership and business communication skills through teamwork, class discussions, formal presentations, and preparation of a written report.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

There is no textbook required for this class; however, there is a required course pack (approximate cost $84). Students can purchase the course pack and download all materials on Canvas. If you are still unsure about taking the course, please wait to purchase until the second week as there is no secondary market for the course pack. Course content material is provided through posted PowerPoint slides, readings (e.g., articles and book chapters) and cases. Power point slides will be posted after each class.

STUDENT WORK AND GRADING

Students are required to complete assigned background and case readings prior to each class, arrive to class on time and prepared to make comments and ask questions that add to the understanding (your own and your classmates') of course materials. Student assessment is based on:

1) Class Participation 15%
2) Midterm 1 25%
3) Midterm 2 25%
4) Final Project:
    a. Presentation 10%
    b. Report 25%

Rice University is one of the top educational institutions in the world. As such, a grade of 'A' should reflect work that could be described as outstanding, exceptional, or excellent. Good work will receive a grade of 'B'. Work that is considered average or adequate will receive a 'C'.

The 4 components of your course grade are discussed in more detail below:

1) Class participation (15%): An important course requirement is active involvement in class discussion. Your participation is essential—for both your own learning and that of other students. Because this is a case-based course, much of the learning will take place in our collective discussion of the business cases. I expect every student to arrive well prepared and able to answer the day's assignment/discussion questions. It may be helpful to meet in study groups to discuss the case and the assigned questions before class, although this is not a requirement. Because the class is primarily discussion-based, if you have any reservations or questions about participating in class at any time, I encourage you to email me to meet. Regular attendance is necessary but not sufficient for a good or excellent grade on this component (see Absence Policies below). Because the course is remote, and students may have connectivity or other issues (e.g., severe time zone differences) that constrain 'in-class' participation, we will also be using the Discussions feature in Canvas to enable participation. I will post questions in the Discussions section of Canvas before class and you should feel free to participate via this alternate mode. The remote class environment also offers other participation opportunities, including the Zoom chat function, which will also be available to you. Quality is far more important than quantity in the assessment of student participation (although some level of quantity is necessary to be able to evaluate quality). The highest quality class comments:
    - Articulate a clear stance or argument;
    - Use data or examples to support arguments and conclusions;
    - Make or raise issues that are relevant to the current focus of the class;
    - Show curiosity and a willingness to experiment;
    - Take into consideration the ideas offered by others;
    - Help others feel safe about participating by maintaining respect for other students' comments.
2) Midterm 1 (25%): After completion of the business strategy module, you will be tested on your knowledge and understanding of the content covered in class lectures, discussions and readings. Midterm exams are closed-book, time limited, online and will include both multiple-choice and short-answer questions.
3) Midterm 2 (25%): After completion of the corporate and innovation strategy module, you will be tested on your knowledge and understanding of the content covered in class lectures, discussions and readings. Midterm exams are closed-book, time limited, online and will include both multiple-choice and short-answer questions.

4) Final project: The final project is a team-based assignment that involves using frameworks and concepts from the course to analyze a company's current strategy, performance, a strategic challenge facing the company and your advice for addressing the challenge to repair and/or sustain performance. Essentially, in this assignment, you will use an actual company to demonstrate your understanding of and ability to apply and integrate course frameworks/concepts (e.g., industry analysis, positioning, activity systems, corporate scope decisions, etc.). Guidelines for the selection of companies for the project will be discussed in class; in general, companies in industries that are in transition or companies undergoing major strategic changes are potentially the most interesting. You may not choose a company highlighted in the cases from the course.
    - Project proposal outline (1 page, bullet-point format): This is not evaluated for your course grade, but is a necessary to assist you in your final project. This should introduce the company you have chosen, the specific challenge the company faces that you will analyze, how you will draw on course concepts in your analysis, as well as a plan for gathering quantitative (e.g., financial statements) and qualitative data (e.g., interviews, analyst reports). Each team will receive feedback on their proposal from the professor.
    - Presentation (10%): Each of the final project teams will make a presentation prior to the completion of their final project report. While your analysis for the company should be finalized for the presentation, consider this an opportunity to improve your final report by incorporating feedback from your peers and professor. Your goals in the presentation will be (1) to provide a comprehensive summary of the company's strategy and performance using class concepts and frameworks, (2) identify challenges the company is facing, and (3) provide your suggestions on how to address the challenge(s) in order to sustain or achieve a competitive advantage.
    - Final project report (25%): Specific guidelines for the final project report will be distributed and discussed in class. Questions/issues to be addressed in the final analysis/paper, include: What industry does the company operate in and how attractive is the industry? What is the company's strategy and positioning in the industry and what activities support its positioning and strategy? How have these contributed to its relative performance? What strategic challenge(s) does the company face in improving/sustaining performance? What is your recommendation(s) for addressing the strategic challenge? What assumptions underlie your recommendation(s)?

ABSENCE POLICIES

I realize that people become ill, have job interviews and other obligations that may lead them to miss a class session or a team meeting from time to time. It is the obligation of every student to act as a professional in these cases. You are expected to inform others of your need to miss, arrange for a classmate to take notes in your absence and to bring you up to date on any materials or decisions you missed; take on additional responsibilities to substitute for the missed obligations. Attendance is tracked but not graded per se. However, an excessive number of missed classes or extreme tardiness will adversely affect your participation grade as you cannot contribute to the class when you are not present. Students with a valid reason for being absent from class (e.g., illness, connectivity issues, delayed campus move-in) are encouraged to email the TA (yw85@rice.edu), cc'ing the professor, to ensure their absence from class is recorded accordingly.

VIRTUAL CLASS ETIQUETTE

Our class will be remote via the Zoom platform. To improve the learning environment for everyone, I ask that students do the following:

- Log in on time, ready to begin, and please mute your microphone when not speaking.
- Please use a headset with microphone (or equivalent) to minimize sound feedback from your surroundings when you *are* speaking (if you don't have a headset with mic, let me know and I'll send you one).
- To facilitate a sense of a personalized classroom community, please keep your camera on and name yourself as you would prefer to be called. Virtual backgrounds are a great way to block out that messy room or relatives/roommates in the background. I acknowledge that having cameras on may not be feasible given technology and personal circumstances, if that's the case for you, please email me.
- Electronic devices are inherent to a class that is delivered remotely. At the same time, the use of electronic devices for purposes other than the class (e.g., chat apps, checking Instagram, etc.), during class time, is very disruptive to your fellow students and presenters (we can see you!). I recommend students close all computer applications other than those required for the class to best facilitate your learning, and those of your peers.
- Check out the "Zoom Online Etiquette for Remote Students" document on the Canvas main page.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND RICE HONOR CODE

Students are encouraged to discuss cases, exchange ideas, collaborate and cooperate with others in the class where appropriate. New ideas often arise from such interactions. However, assignments and presentations must be your own work or the work of your team. Using outside materials is encouraged as long as you clearly identify the source. The key point is to make clear which ideas and text were developed by you or your group members, and which came from other sources.

Academic dishonesty, as defined by university policy, will not be tolerated in any form. Activities that constitute academic dishonesty in this course include: (1) copying text passages verbatim or paraphrasing those passages in your paper without referencing the original source, (2) consulting those who have already taken BUSI 390 (BUSI 471), and (3) working with others on midterms, individual assignments or working with non-team members on team assignments.

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The class schedule is provided below, with corresponding materials students should read before coming to that class (e.g., reading, case, video), and additional notes. Below are key dates for major milestones in the course:

March 2: Midterm 1

March 18: Team project groups formed and TA (yw85@rice.edu) has been emailed your team members names

March 30: Team project proposal submitted via email to professor

April 6: Midterm 2

April 8: Team project groups have met before April 8th with professor to receive proposal feedback

April 22-29: Team project presentations

May 5: Team project reports uploaded to Canvas by 11:59 pm

Class Schedule

Date	Topic	Required reading(s) and/or other content	Note!
Jan 26	Course introduction	Syllabus	
Jan 28	What is strategy?	*Can you say what your strategy is?* (Collis & Rukstad, 2008)	
Business-level strategy			
Feb 2	Industry analysis	Last name starting with A to N: *The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy* (Porter, 2008), Watch Video 1, Case: Cola Wars Continue	If your last name starts with O to Z, don't come to class
Feb 4	Industry analysis	Last name starting with O to Z: *The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy* (Porter, 2008), Watch Video 1, Case: Cola Wars Continue	If your last name starts with A to N, don't come to class
Feb 9	Positioning	Case: Walmart	
Feb 11	Positioning	Case: Zara	
Feb 16	Competitive advantage	*What is Strategy?* (Porter, 1996)	
Feb 18	Competitive advantage	Case: Trader Joe's	
Feb 23	Competitive dynamics	Case: Airbus vs. Boeing	
Feb 25	Application & review	Research company to be chosen by class	
March 2	Midterm	Online midterm	
Corporate & innovation strategy			
March 4	Corporate scope	*Choosing Corporate Scope* (Ghemawat & Rivkin, 2010), Watch Video 2	
March 9	Diversification	Case: The Walt Disney Company	
March 11	International diversification	*Primer on international strategy frameworks*	
March 16	**Spring Sprinkle Day**	**NO CLASSES**	
March 18	International diversification	Case: CEMEX	DUE: groups formed
March 23	Innovation strategy	Case: Netflix	
March 25	Innovation strategy	Case: Uber	
March 30	Strategy under uncertainty	In-class exercise – no reading	DUE: project proposal
April 1	Application & review	Research company to be chosen by class	
April 6	Midterm	Online midterm	
Strategic turnarounds			
April 8	**Spring Sprinkle Day**	**NO CLASSES**	DUE: project meeting
April 13	Strategy gone wrong	Case: Sales Misconduct at Wells Fargo	
April 15	Strategic turnarounds	Case: LEGO	
April 20	Strategic turnarounds	Case: Unilever's New Global Strategy	
April 22	Final project presentations	Final project presentations - no reading	
April 27	Final project presentations	Final project presentations - no reading	
April 29	Final project presentations & course wrap	Final project presentations - no reading	
May 5		Submit final project on May 5th on Canvas	DUE: Project report